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C!N
Abacus Comics

Comics You Can Count On

Last week *CSN* told you about Alias Comics' plans to focus only on Christian comics—and at the time, the future of the various non-Christian titles currently published by Alias was unknown. Well, now we can say some of those books have a new home with a new company created by former Alias executive director *Mike S. Miller.*

Miller has announced that he is taking his popular all-ages fantasies ***Imaginaries*** and ***Lullaby,*** to his own imprint, Abacus Comics, beginning in 2007. Abacus will also be the home for ***Kord & Harley, Sixgun Samurai, & Soulless.*** "Abacus will be a few of my books, and a few books by Mortal World Entertainment for the time being," Miller said. In addition, Abacus will also offer ***The Abacus Omnibus.*** "The idea of the ***Abacus Omnibus*** is to have a home for shorter stories, where 'mini-series' can exist, but within the framework of an ongoing title. Like the idea of placing the limited ***Imaginaries Movie Comic*** into the ***Omnibus,*** rather than making it a stand-alone book. So the book will have rotating content, some longer-standing, some shorter run stories."

Why Abacus Comics? "We wanted to use something that symbolizes being trustworthy, something that fans and retailers can count on to deliver great product when promised," Miller said. "We didn't want to call it 'Calculator Comics.' Thus 'Abacus' was born.

"Now we have a name we have to live up to. In order to keep our promise, we've set up a few ground rules that creators involved in Abacus will have to abide:

"One: Comics have to be *great.* We will not publish anything we wouldn't plunk down hard earned money for ourselves at the local comic shop. Enjoying something isn't reason enough to publish it. It has to be something that you look at critically and ask yourself, 'Would I pay $3.50 for this book if it were sitting on the shelf?' If the answer is 'no,' then business-wise there is no good reason to publish it.

"Two: Comics have to be on time. For us, that means that a new series has to have a minimum of four issues in the can before we solicit. And subsequent issues have to be on our server before we solicit them. Late books can kill even the best of series. Every retailer I've spoken to has told me the same thing: if your books are late, it's a death sentence—not only for the book, but for the reputation of the company.

"Three: Comics have to be ongoing series. Miniseries come and go, and no one cares a year later. With our 'ongoing only' policy, we give fans time to care about the characters we create. After all, if the fans don't care, what's the point? The best comic book success stories are those built upon years of growing a fan-following. If Abacus is in this for the long haul, and we are, we have to develop books that will have that long-term growth potential.

"We hope that with these simple rules in place, we can build a foundation of great product and a fan-base that will keep coming back to our titles month after month. And hopefully Abacus can generate a trust factor with fans and retailers alike, so that in the end, our motto will stand the test of time."

Miller is hitting the ground running with Abacus. "The final Alias issues of all three currently published titles are already on the shelves. ***Imaginaries*** hasn't seen a new issue in quite some time, because I've been looking for *just* the right artist to fit the book. Well, I've found him. His name is *Nikos,* he's from Greece, and he's phenomenal. I don't want to show any art until we're ready to start pushing the book, but think *Bart Sears* meets *Arnie Jorgensen,* and you're in the ballpark. The continuation of the ***Imaginaries*** series from Abacus in 2007 is going to really take the book to a new level.

"Also on the ***Imaginaries*** front, is the 'sideways' ***Imaginaries: The Movie Comic,*** which is a condensed version of the entire first story arc told in eighty pages, drawn by myself. I'm about thirty pages in, and it's great fun. We may run that in the ***Alias Omnibus,*** but the decision hasn't been finalized yet.

"As for ***Sixgun Samurai,*** the first six issues wrapped up the first story arc, and we're working on the new book now. The artist, up-and-comer *Harold Edge,* has been bombarded with other work since his debut on ***Sixgun,*** so it's on a temporary hold before we'll see issue seven, but it's coming, picking up about a year after the end of issue six, and with a new addition to the cast that will keep things hot and hazardous for the teenaged Sixgun Samurai!

"And as for ***Lullaby,*** #4 of the ongoing series was the last Alias issue Alias. I'm working things out now with Diamond and *Hector [Sevilla,* artist and co-creator of ***Lullaby***] about getting issue five out without having to resolicit, but we'll have to see. Hector has been wanting to stretch his creative wings beyond ***Lullaby*** and has taken a short gig on a mini-series, so I may just hold issue five until we're back on track and have a few issues in the can, so we can produce the book on a more regular schedule. We *do* have other ***Lullaby*** books in the works from the ***Once Upon a Time*** series, focusing on the various characters in the world of ***Lullaby.*** Next up is ***Lullaby, Once Upon a Time: Red Riding Hood.***"

Miller also offered a little background information on the other two Abacus titles. "***Kord and Harley*** is a supernatural buddy book set in the here and now. The Catholic church has clandestinely created an order to deal with demonic activity and possession. This secret order is Led by Father Merrick, a man with secrets of his own, and his ever watchful assistant Sister Margaret Day. Together they oversee and advise their unique Charges; Kord, an 11th century stone golem that has converted from the Kabbalah teachings that spawned his creation to Catholicism, and Harley, a teenaged genetic anomaly, found by Father Merrick after Harley escaped a top-secret human/reptilian DNA splicing facility in the hills of Argentina. The first story arc pits the unlikely duo against the worst of the demonic forces of Hell. Namely the Seven Deadly sins."

The second series is also a supernatural adventure with a religious theme. "***Soulless*** is an apocalyptic horror set in the not-so-distant future. A horrific look at mans last days on earth. God has removed his presence from the Earth and our life-giving sun has burned out. But man still moves forward in his arrogance and pride. Striving to make a something out of nothing. New powers move in to claim what God has abandoned. And the ever living creature known as the Soulless gathers the souls that are left behind. Who is his master, and is even he aware of the un-seen leash that dictates his every move?"

Will Abacus publish collected editions of the earlier Alias issues of ***Imaginaries, Lullaby,*** and ***Sixgun Samurai?*** "I retain *all* the rights to my work, but as a practical matter, I am fulfilling the obligations each book has to Alias as a company for funding them. ***Lullaby*** is an Abacus book now; we will be soliciting the TPB's, even thought they have the Alias logo on them. In a sense, Alias became the 'studio' that is publishing ***Lullaby*** through Abacus. We haven't worked out the same scenario with ***Imaginaries*** as yet, but the ongoing title should boost the sales of the ***Imaginaries Lost and Found TPB,*** whether it is ordered through Alias or through Abacus. ***Sixgun Samurai*** hasn't seen print yet as a TPB, but when it does, it will be an Abacus book through and through."

Miller is already setting up the 2007 schedule for Abacus. "Thus far we've got ***Kord and Harley*** scheduled to launch in March, and ***Soulless*** set to launch in May. Both titles are well ahead in production. As the other books reach a better level of completion, we'll announce what months they will launch. I'm also hoping to have the ***Abacus Omnibus*** on schedule for spring/early summer as well."

Miller is juggling full-time duties as Abacus editor along with his role as a writer and artist. "I'm editing all the books, which is something I wasn't doing at Alias. It does take a little more time, but I want to make sure everything we put out meets the highest standards possible. Running Alias has really taught me that (a) I can't do everything, and (b) I have to prioritize that which I can fit into my schedule. Making sure these books are all rock-solid before we solicit them is high on my priorities, but I do have a lot of other work to do as well."

Will Abacus expand beyond this initial group of titles? "Time will tell. I just want to make sure everything we do can stand on its own feet and build its own audience before Abacus starts adding more titles to the fold."

by Cliff Biggers

Courtesy your friendly neighborhood comics outlet!

Comic Shop Newsarama

Produced by Comic Shop News in cooperation with Matt Brady and newsarama.com

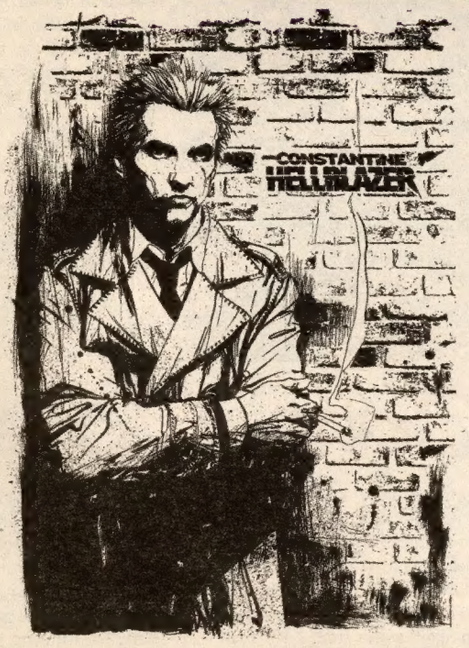
Diggle Adds Heat to Hellblazer

Hellblazer has certainly attracted more than its share of top-notch writers during its lengthy run—*Garth Ennis, Jamie Delano, Warren Ellis, Neil Gaiman, Mark Millar, Paul Jenkins, Mike Carey, Denise Mina...* and now *Andy Diggle* will bring renewed heat to John Constantine's saga as he assumes the writing honors beginning with ***Hellblazer #230.***

Diggle told ***Comic Shop Newsarama's*** *Matt Brady* what made the ***Hellblazer*** gig so appealing. "Constantine's been my favorite comics character for twenty years now - Christ, that makes me feel old! I remember voting him for the Eagle Award for 'Character Most Worthy Of His Own Series' back when he was just a supporting character in ***Swamp Thing***, and I couldn't believe it when he won. I never imagined at the time that I'd actually be writing that series one day. ***Hellblazer's*** always held a special place in my heart, and it's the only comic series I've kept my complete run of."

Does Diggle have any particular favorites from John Constantine's storied run? "For me it goes right back to those original Alan Moore Swamp Thing stories, the 'American Gothic' arc where Constantine first appears. There was an edge to him back then - he was this sharp, cocky, dangerous little bastard, and I'd like to bring some of that attitude back.

"Beyond that? I'd have to say *Jamie Delano's* early Hellblazer issues, especially the opening two-parter. Issue #27



is a personal favorite - 'Hold Me' by *Neil Gaiman & Dave McKean*. Garth's run, obviously, especially the cancer arc. And I've always enjoyed Mike Carey's stuff, I thought 'All His Engines' was great. I think it's a measure of Constantine's richness as a character that all these writers can emphasize different aspects of his personality, but somehow they always gel. Constantine always feels like the same guy."

Take a look at the roster of writers who have chronicled Constantine's exploits and the "British-ness" of the list becomes immediately evident. What makes this book so appealing to writers from the UK? "Well, he's British, for starters, and it does seem to be the case that British writers find it easier to capture the British voice than American writers do. I don't think it's anything to do with writing talent, just that we see a huge amount of American TV and movies over here, so we're exposed to a lot of American voices.

"On the other hand, I don't think there's a huge audience for British stuff in America. Everyone seems to think we're all either Cockney gangsters or landed gentry sipping tea from fine bone china while watching re-runs of Benny Hill. So I suppose it's just a question of what you're used to. I'm a Silk Cut-smoking Londoner myself, with family ties to Liverpool, so I feel like I know his world and his voice pretty well."

Recent writers have put Constantine through the wringer; what condition will he be in at the beginning of Diggle's run? "*Mike Carey* and *Denise Mina* have both put Constantine through the wringer lately, so he's feeling a bit battered and bruised. A bit... crumpled. So I'm going to have him take a long, hard look at himself, and decide it's time to try and get back some of his edge. Get his shit together. Sharpen himself up a bit.

"What's driving him forward now is the same thing it always was - he's an adrenaline junkie. Some have described it as an 'addiction to magic,' but personally I think magic is just a means to an end for Constantine, not an end in itself. It's the *thrill* he craves - he's a meddler. He can't walk past a rock without turning it over to see what crawls out from under it. He can't help but pick at the scab of the world. He just has to *know*. Constantine has faced down the Devil himself, but I think his greatest fear would probably be *boredom*. That would be John's own personal Hell - just having nothing to do, nothing nasty to stick his nose into.

"I think Constantine isn't so much a cynic as a jaded idealist. After all, he wouldn't have been outraged by the social injustices of Thatcher's Britain if he didn't care. He's disappointed at the world, and he has this overwhelming compulsion to try and fix things. Magic is just a short-cut, the quickest and easiest fix. At its best, Hellblazer was always "supernatural horror with a social conscience", and that I'd like to bring back to the book - although I have no interest in turning it into some kind of personal soap-box. It's about Constantine's worldview, not mine."

So what does Diggle have in the works for ***Hellblazer?*** "I'm planning on splitting my run into two roughly equal halves. The first half takes place mostly in and around London, with supernatural horror stories taking a twisted view of Blair's Britain, and Constantine sticking his nose in where it doesn't belong. Then, once the villains of the piece have emerged, the stories will begin to close in more on Constantine himself, as he finds himself the focus of a very high stakes game. In the process he'll be forced to deal with some dangerously unresolved issues from his past... including his time at Ravenscar Secure Facility For The Dangerously Deranged."

Hellblazer #230, Diggle's first issue, is scheduled for March release.

Invincible Transformed Into Immovable Object

Okay, may not *immovable*... but it's going to take some real muscle to lift ***The Complete Invincible Library Volume One!***

This massive hardcover, with almost eight hundred pages of super-teen content, includes the first twenty-four issues of *Robert Kirkman, Cory Walker, & Ryan Ottley's* ***Invincible,*** along with the special zero issue and the ***Free Comic Book Day 2004*** story.

But wait, there's more!

This whopper of a hardcover also includes more than 150 pages of sketchbook material, covers, scripts, and *Robert Kirkman's* original series proposal. It's a whopper of a volume that carries an impressive price tag—$125 for the standard edition and $175 for the deluxe signed edition—but it's well worth it.

"These big books are a treat to do. They're a bit on the expensive side, but you have to be able to afford an assistant just to help you lift them so I figure people who can afford to lift them can afford to buy them," Kirkman said. "I like giving people as much content as possible in this big hardcovers and this thing delivers. There's literally not a sketch or scribble not contained in this book. This book has everything but the brain cells that generated it."

This isn't the first time that Kirkman has offered a deluxe collection of one of his fan-favorite series. "Last year we rolled out the ***The Walking Dead Deluxe Hardcover*** just in time for the holidays and it was a big hit. I wanted to give ***Invincible*** the same treatment—and here we are!" Kirkman said. "These things make excellent Christmas gifts! I'm giving

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one to my wife--she's going to *love* it."

Like the ***Walking Dead*** volume, ***The Invincible Library*** is limited to a one-time offering of 2500 copies, along with a signed and numbered edition of 300 copies. Once those are gone, that's it for this collectible edition—so don't put off adding this one to your want list. Since Paramount Pictures has optioned this one for a feature film, you'll have to act decisively if you want to stay ahead of the trendy crowd!

"***Invincible*** has really come into its own as one of the best superhero books on the stands," stated Comics Executive Director *Eric Stephenson* said. "We're selling out every issue and sales are continuing to climb, and this deluxe, limited edition collection should make the perfect introduction for anyone looking to catch up on the series fast."

The Complete Invincible Library Volume One, a 768-page hardcover, is slated for early December release.

Everybody Loves Some Body

Black market body parts... it's not exactly a new concept. But writer *Scott Beatty* is adding a new twist to the story: the organs being sold come from people with super-powers.

And if the crime involves the sale of black market metahuman organs, it's only appropriate that a superhero with a medical degree should be a part of the solution.

Welcome to the world of "Skin Game," a two-part Dr. Mid-Nite story by Beatty and artist *Rags Morales* that begins in ***JSA Classified #19.*** Pieter Cross, aka Dr. Mid-Nite, is no stranger to the darker side of humanity. But while his night-vision superpower will surely be called upon during the investigation, his medical expertise may be even more important as he tracks down who is stealing and selling metahuman body parts -- and what evil villain may end up benefiting.

Beatty told ***Comic Shop Newsarama's*** *Vaneta Rogers* how the story came about. "I wrote a poem about organ-napping for a poetry workshop when I was in graduate school years ago. I was stuck for ideas one night while studying/doing my laundry and came across an old ***Life*** magazine at the laundromat. The cover showed a kid from Brazil whose eyes were stolen so that his healthy corneas could be sold on the black market. The poem wrote itself... and the image just got stuck in my head.

"When I was pitching ***JSA Classified*** concepts to series editor *Mike Carlin,* that story just sort of dragged itself up from my subconscious. I'm strangely drawn to medical oddities -- mostly out of an obsessive-compulsive tic for considering worst-case scenarios."

Who are the unwitting "donors" in this organlegging scheme? "A few fairly well-known DCU heroes and villains, and a couple more obscure but recognizable to hardcore Johnny DCs, are victims of the metahuman body part black market. Fittingly, the story's called 'Skin Trade.' Because of his medical background in treating metas, Dr. Mid-Nite is called in to offer a 'second opinion.'"

Not only will readers find some familiar veteran heroes and villains in this two-part tale, they'll also meet a new character. "Endless Winter makes her debut. Fans of the JSA might recognize her surname, altered just a bit. Her current incarnation is all new, however, and a logical extension of her character. Did I mention Strongarm? He shows up, too."

But the star of the series remains Dr. Mid-Nite—and with good reason. "Well, at the heart of it, the story is a medical mystery. With any other hero, it's just an unsettling supervillain story. For the Doctor, it's not just about kicking the villain's butt -- it's about curing the malady and ultimately helping the patients."

What was it about Dr. Mid-Nite that interested Beatty? "I always liked the character on a superficial level -- the Golden Age Doc Mid-Nite, I mean. I suppose I was drawn to the cool costume and inventive conceit that he was blind in daylight but could see clearly in total darkness. I'm a sucker for O. Henry bits of irony like that. Pieter Cross was more an enigma to me, even after reading and re-reading *Matt Wagner's* brilliant miniseries. I needed to make him more than 'Dr. Batman,' and that involved finding his narrative 'voice' and running with it.

"I like the fact that he's a disgraced physician who feels the need to redress his sins by wearing a costume and using his medical skills to fight crime. He also turned a crippling disability into his greatest asset. Even after finishing the ***JSA Classified*** arc, I keep thinking about the character and possible directions to take him. Batman does what he does on a well-honed intuitive level. Dr. Mid-Nite has to work it out in his head and go at it step-by-step. Like complex surgery, he can't skip over parts because he's in a hurry. The ankle bone connects to the shin bone and so forth... in that order. When you're blind and feeling your way through the dark, you can't afford any missteps."

Beatty is particularly enjoying the opportunity to work with *Rags Morales,* who rose to superstar status with his work on ***Identity Crisis.*** "It's a real coup to work with an artist of his creative caliber, and someone who both *gets* and *likes* the subject matter you're delving into. In fact, the experience working with Rags on ***JSA Classified*** has been so positive, we're collaborating on something else... a WildStorm miniseries slated for 2007 release."

JSA Classified #19, the first part of "Skin Trade," is scheduled for late November release.

Journey Through the Past

With the success of their weekly ***52*** series that fills in the missing year after ***Infinite Crisis,*** DC has given its readers plenty of reason to be excited about the past. In 2007, that excitement about the past will continue in five new ***Year One*** miniseries designed to streamline, clarify, or emphasize the start of a character (or characters) who will be playing major roles in the months to come.

The five series are:

- ***Green Arrow: Year One*** by *Andy Diggle & Jock*
- ***Metamorpho: Year One*** by *Dan Jurgens*
- ***Teen Titans: Year One*** by *Amy Wolfram & Karl Kerschl*
- ***Black Lightning: Year One*** by *Jen Van Meter & Cully Hamner*
- ***Huntress: Year One,*** written by *Ivory Madison* (no artist announced thus far)

So why these characters—and what is the reason for a ***Year One*** focus? DC Universe Executive Editor *Dan DiDio* explains how the five books came about. "Basically, it all ties into the concept that we came out of ***Infinite Crisis*** with, where we're looking at some characters that, over the years, given the twists and turns and reboots and shifting continuities, may have had their focus shifted a little. These allow us to refocus the direction for each one of these characters and reestablish their origins are, and also where they might be headed to in the future."

Is DC using these series as an opportunity to streamline their origins and re-establish where these characters fit into continuity? "Yeah, but also I want to use the ***Year Ones*** to reestablish these characters' places in the DCU," DiDio said. "These are *major* players in the DC Universe—these are characters that have had series, have series, have had followings, but may have also had some twists and turns in regards to continuity and have become a little convoluted over the years. I'm looking to re-establish them, and I think the best way to reestablish any character is with a ***Year One*** story, and build out from there."

DiDio admits that not *every* character's origins are that complex—but that doesn't mean that there's no need for a ***Year One*** tale. "Green Arrow is probably the exception to the rule. We have a lot of big plans for Green Arrow next year, and we also had real interest in the team of *Andy Diggle & Jock* [best known for their work on the Vertigo series ***The Losers]*** wanting to do this series—so one of the reasons why we're doing it is to reestablish Green Arrow's roots, but also give a chance to showcase what I feel to be an incredibly strong and talented team."

While some of the characters have had prominent places "in the spotlight" over the past year, it's been many years since one of them had a real "starring role." "Metamorpho's a character who's had several starts and fits of popularity over the years, with ***Outsiders*** always being a showcase for him," DiDio said. "We sort of played the fake-out with ***Outsiders,*** having Shift be in the lead, rather than Metamorpho, and now, we felt that Metamorpho came out strong from ***Infinite Crisis,*** and we wanted to clarify his role in the DCU. But also – the story is about Simon Stagg too, and Simon is going to be one

of the key players in the DCU in regards to his role in 'corporate DC America,' so to speak."

The characters with the most complex continuity are The Teen Titans, who have gone through many incarnations and changes of focus in their forty-year history. So which version of the Titans roster will the ***Year One*** series focus on? "We want to go back and show what the earliest team was, and rebuild that origin, too. I don't think we've ever done a ***Year One*** with that team before, and by doing this, it will allow us to look at the relationship between Robin and Wonder Girl and Kid Flash, Speedy, Aqualad and the rest as the team is built, while showing some of the lesser-known Teen Titans characters along the way.

"And also, because we're in the position of creating the Titans East, we thought it would be a good time to go back and establish the roots a little more of the original team."

Black Lightning has been propelled from obscurity to starring status due to his role in the revamped ***Justice League of America,*** so he seems a natural for the ***Year One*** treatment. "He's another character that has been peripheral for a number of years, supported his own series for a couple of years as well, and between his role with the Justice League and Thunder being so prominent in Outsiders for the past few years, we thought it would be a great time to show his origin as well. Also – we can also show the origin of Thunder in his story, too."

Like Black Lightning, the Huntress is a character who has been elevated from comics obscurity to a more prominent role in ***Birds of Prey,*** so it's reasonable that DC would take advantage of this opportunity to establish just who she is... and who she *isn't*. "She's a funny one," DiDio said. "As we're trying to reestablish the Bat-Family, so to speak, with the re-introduction of Batwoman, and the 'repositioning' of Batgirl, Huntress is one of those characters that's been played with a lot in ***Birds of Prey***, and we teased the Earth-2 version in ***Infinite Crisis***, so it was important for us to get back and reestablish our version of Huntress' roots again so everybody was clear about which interpretation of the character we had running around, and what her role was in the DC Universe."

DiDio doesn't see this merely as an opportunity to expand on the backstory of these characters; as DiDio sees it, it's also an opportunity "to start to expand our talent pool" with lesser-known talents like *Amy Wolfram* and newcomer *Ivory Madison*. "We have some extremely talented writers who are established in other areas, whether its in prose novels or animation or just in writing in general, and I wanted to have an opportunity to get some of these voices out there, as well as get some fresh sets of eyes on these characters so that we can see a story that we may have known about form before with a twist or two along the way that gives it a nice fresh take."

The idea isn't to radically shake things up, but to streamline and refocus continuities that are, in some cases, divergent and even contradictory. "The main story that they know will still be there," DiDio said, "but there might be two or three surprises along the way that not only add to the telling of the origin and backstory, but also things that will be expanded on in the upcoming years. So, a lot of this has to do with the fact that we're not just revisiting the past, but we're also planting seeds for the future."

When can readers expect to see the first ***Year One*** series? "The first set should be coming out in March or April, and then on a regular basis," which will see the series launch at about the same time that *52* wraps up its year-long run. "My goal is not to have any of them overlap at the same point, but

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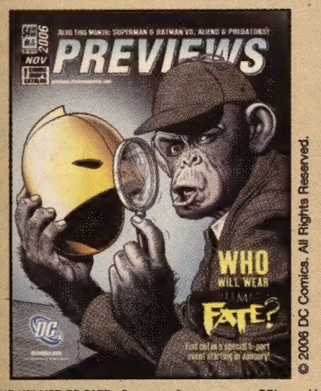

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THE HELMET OF FATE—Emerging from events in DC's weekly series, **52**, the mystery behind the apparent death of Dr. Fate – and the identity of the person who will become the new wearer of the mystical helm – is investigated in **The Helmet of Fate**, a 5-part event beginning in January and starring such classic characters as Ibis the Invincible and Detective Chimp!

USAGI YOJIMBO #100—Featuring cover-to-cover art and story, the landmark **Usagi Yojimbo #100** good-naturedly roasts both the Bushido bunny and his creator, Stan Sakai, and features contributions by some of Stan's biggest admirers – all of whom also happen to be some of the hottest names in comics!

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The Adventures of Spawn #1—Director's Cut—This special "director's cut" edition features never-before-seen pages that expand upon the story seen in the original **Spawn** web comic, in which *Spawn X* teams with *The Redeemer* and the robotic *Omega Spawn* to battle the forces of darkness and stave off the end of the world!

Thunderbolts #110—Warren Ellis and Mike Deodato take control in **Thunderbolts #110**, introducing an all-new villainous team roster! Meet America's newest celebrities: *Venom, Moonstone, Bullseye, Songbird, Radioactive Man, The Swordsman, Penance,* and *Green Goblin*, each of them ready to make the world a safer place – one would-be costumed hero at a time!

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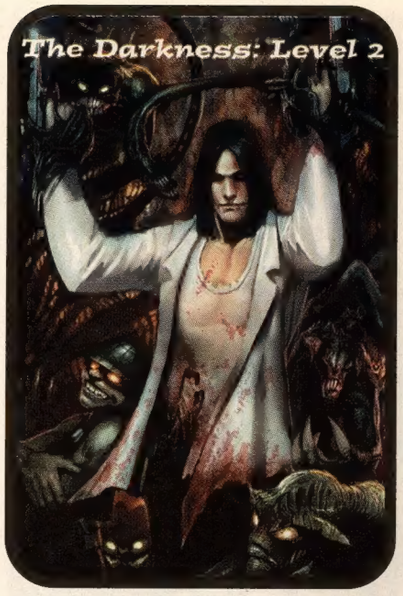
allow them to come out at a time that might be key for a character in the coming year. We've got a couple more coming down the pipeline too, and I think readers can probably start to figure out who would make good candidates, as we've got a few characters who, over the years, have seen their origins twisted and turned to a point that you want some level of clarity put back in there."

Coming Comics—Image in January

A five-man US combat team confronts zombies in Vietnam in *'68,* a oneshot by *Mark Kidwell, Nat Jones, & Jay Fotos.*

The ***Spawn*** online web comic by *Jonathan David Goff & Khary Randolph* comes to print in an expanded version in ***The Adventures of Spawn #1—Director's Cut.*** This story unites Al Simmons with the Redeemer and the robotic Omega Spawn to combat the villainous forces of Mammon, Overtkill, Cy-Gor and Tiffany in order to stop them from retrieving the infamous 13 Relics of Ruin.

Top Cow's ***Darkness*** relaunch continues with ***The Darkness: Level 2*** by *Paul*



Jenkins, David Wohl, & Tyler Kirkham. This tale, set in the depths of hell, focuses on a lone British soldier who is forced to relive his life over and over. He needs to take a hill that's controlled by the Germans but he can never make it. That is until he's helped in this Sisyphusean task by Jackie Estacado.

The book is offered with covers by *Stjepan Sejic, Tyler Kirkham, Marc Silvestri, & Dale Keown;* there is also a videogame cover. For those of you with upscale tastes, Top Cow is also offering a 500-copy limited edition lithograph of the *Dale Keown* cover.

The Pentagon is forced to reassess their tenuous relationship with Commander Adam Archer in *Joe Casey & Tom Scioli's* ***Godland #16,*** a specially-priced 60¢ issue that offers new readers an affordable jumping-on point. Is Archer an all-American hero... or a threat to humanity?

Young, smart and beautiful, Grace Stokes had the perfect life. By a young age, she'd already accomplished what most people could only dream of. First as a multiple-record-setting X-Games champion, and most recently as sole designer and president of her own clothing company, Grace was an icon for a generation. But on a fateful trip to Japan, Grace discovered that she was no ordinary person, but one of The Innocents. Blessed with unbelievable abilities, the Innocents are living embodiments of Yin and Yang. Unfortunately for Grace, somebody wants them *dead*. Witness her quest for survival in ***The Innocents,*** an original graphic novel by *David Wohl, Bing Cansino, & Haberlin Studios.*

Vampires versus a cloned Jesus Christ... it's an over-the-top premise that just won't die! The confrontation progresses to the next level in ***Loaded Bible 2: Blood of Christ,*** a one-shot by

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- Starship Troopers: Damaged Justice #1—Director's Cut
- Starship Troopers: Damaged Justice #1—Director's Cut / Signed
- Starship Troopers: Dead Man's Hand #1—Director's Cut

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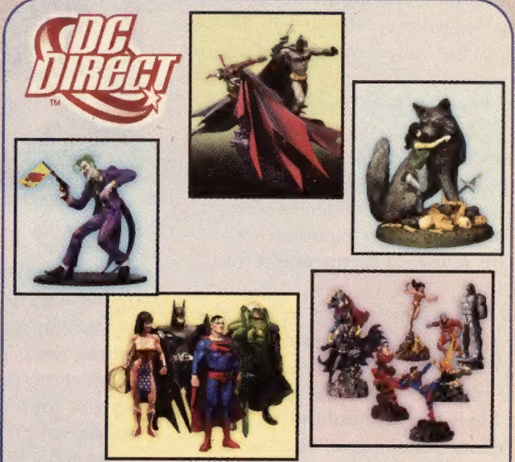

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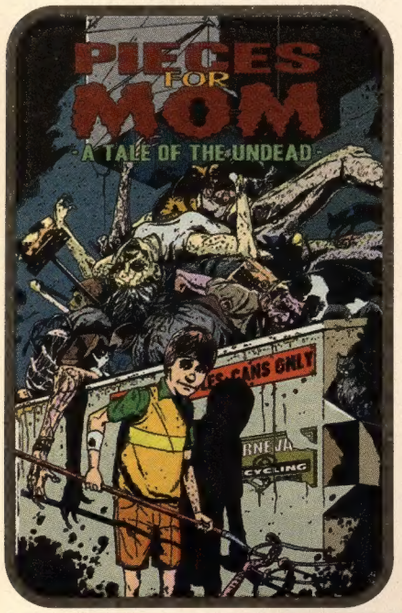
Tim Seeley, Mike Norton,, & Mark Englert. The cloned Jesus must decide whether he'll be a savior or an exterminator—and there are some bounty hunters who are determined to eliminate him before he makes his choice. Do we really need to warn you that some might find its content offensive?...



More zombies are coming your way in ***Pieces for Mom—A Tale of the Undead,*** a oneshot by *Steve Niles & Andrew Ritchie.* The world has been overrun, the flesh-eating undead rule the streets, and two teen boys are left abandoned in the city to fend for themselves and care for their rotting mother. Yes, It's a touching family tale!...

The Ben Kulmer story originally serialized in the British magazine ***Comics International*** is collected in *Paul Grist's* ***Weird World of Jack Staff King-Sized Special.*** Kulmer, a thief an an agent for a group that investigates crimes too bizarre for the normal police, blurs the lines separating his two lives when a burglary leads to an experience that even his fellow Q agents might find troubling!...

The Magdalena returns in ***Witchblade #105*** by *Ron Marz & Stjepan Sejic.* Sara must help her friend Patience on a dangerous mission where she discovers what life is like without the Witchblade's assistance. And what is the curious history between the Magdalena and the curator? Meanwhile, Danielle Baptiste continues her baptism through fire as she learns what it means to enter the world of the Witchblade! The book is offered with a two covers by Sejic, whose art is also featured on the limited edition ***Witchblade Stjepan Sejic Lithograph.***

Image collected editions include:

- ***Abandoned,*** a hardcover compilation of the graphic novella ***Apparition: Abandoned*** by *James Pruett & Michael Gaydos;*
- ***Battle Pope Volume Three: Pillow Talk,*** collecting *Robert Kirkman's* ***Battle Pope #s 9-11;***
- ***Brit Volume One: Old Soldier,*** collecting *Robert Kirkman's* saga of a veteran superhero called back to action;
- ***Gear,*** collecting the six issue series by *Doug Tennapel,* with pinups by *Mike Mignola & Rob Schrab;*
- ***Hip Flask: Concrete Jungle,*** collecting thought-provoking Hip Flask tales by *Richard Starkings, Joe Casey, & Ladronn;*
- ***Hunter-Killer Volume One,*** collecting #s 0-12 of the *Mark Waid-Mark Silvestri* series;
- ***The Iron Ghost: Geist Reich,*** collecting the six-issue war adventure by *Chuck Dixon, Sergio Cariello, & Flint Henry;*
- ***The Silencers,*** collecting the espionage-adventure series by *Mark Askwith & R.G. Taylor;*
- ***Spawn Volume Three,*** reprinting ***Spawn #s 34-54;*** and
- ***Witchblade & Tomb Raider: Tankobans,*** a black-and-white manga-sized collection.

Ins & Outs

In: Artist *Tyler Kirkham,* who has re-upped with Top Cow, where he'll work exclusively for the next three years. Of course, since Top Cow is doing some production/packaging for Marvel, readers will continue to see Kirkham's name on Marvel projects such as ***Phoenix: Warsong,*** which he's currently illustrating. "Top Cow is home for me. This is where I started, and this is where I'm staying," Kirkham said. "Right from the beginning, it was the people at Top Cow that helped me get my start in comics."

Out: ***The Lone Ranger #2,*** which sold out prior to its release. "Once again the success of ***The Lone Ranger*** is overwhelming," Dynamite's *Nick Barrucci* said. "We can't thank the retailers and the fans enough. We anticipated #2 to sell out after the success of #1, so we created a variant that printed at the same time to have available for reorders." Ask the friendly folks at your local comic shop about availability of this variant cover edition, which is offered at standard pricing.

In: A *Michael Turner* variant cover for ***Onslaught Reborn #1,*** *Jeph Loeb & Rob Liefeld's* tenth-anniversary return to the world of ***Heroes Reborn.*** This isn't a limited-edition incentive variant, either—the Turner cover will be offered in a 50/50 split with the Liefeld cover. And why not go ahead and pick up one of *each* cover, since a significant portion of the proceeds from ***Onslaught Reborn #s 1-5*** will be donated to The Sam Loeb College Scholarship Fund?

In: *Warren Ellis & Stuart Immonen's* ***Nextwave: Agents of HATE.*** We know what you're thinking—"but didn't you just tell us last week that the series was ending with #12?" Yes, we did... but *Warren Ellis* has good news for fan of the offbeat books, as he reported recently through his online ***Bad News.*** "We were on such a roll with ***Nextwave*** that I was actually into the idea of doing a second year, which is highly unusual for me and work-for-hire properties. So Marvel sat down and looked at the numbers, as they wanted to do a second year too.

"What they found was that, at our current sales levels, they could afford for me to write it, but not for Stuart to draw it. Stuart, as a Marvel-exclusive artist, commands a fee commensurate with his astonishing talent. I'm work-for-hire-exclusive too, but they just send me whisky and loose women and I'm fine.

"So, basically, I could continue to write ***Nextwave,*** but we'd need to find another artist. This, to me, was just wrong. I mean, Stuart would obviously be given a far better job that had actual readers attached to it, but it still seemed a bit like the numbers were conspiring to fire him for doing his job too well.

"Everyone at Marvel pitched in to try and make it work, but the numbers were just against us. So ***Nextwave #12*** will be the final issue of the ongoing series...

However. The numbers game changes when you posit things in terms of limited series. ***Nextwave #12*** will be the last issue of the ongoing series: but there will be more ***Nextwave*** to come, presented as a sequence of limited series.

"This was all worked out some months ago, so I had plenty of time to work the final ***Nextwave*** sequence into a conclusion of sorts. *#11* even features a twelve-page spread that you'll have to buy six copies of the comic to assemble into its full splendor. Everyone wishes I'd thought of that eight or nine months ago..."

Out: Just in case you were counting on seeing ***Ultimate Wolverine Vs. Hulk #3*** in mid-November, you might want to make other plans. That release date is out; Marvel has now pushed the book back until late December.

In: *Alan Moore & Kevin O'Neill's* ***League of Extraordinary Gentlemen: The Black Dossier*** may be running a few months late, but that's not stopping Moore, O'Neill, and Top Shelf publisher *Chris Staros* from making plans for the next project in the series. According to Staros, ***The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen Volume Three*** will be published in three seventy-two-page prestige-format oneshots; while the three books will fit together to tell a comprehensive story, each volume is also designed to stand alone, so that readers will be able to enjoy each volume as it's published without having to wait for the entire series to be completed. No firm release date has been set for ***LoEGv3*** thus far—but as soon as it is scheduled, you'll hear about it in ***CSN!***

In: The big-headed one is about to star in his first-ever limited series! That's right: Modok takes the spotlight (and it'd better be a *big* one!) with the 2007 release if ***Modok's 11*** by *Fred Van Lente & Francis Portela.*

Out: The planned rarity ratio for the variant covers for ***Wetworks*** and ***The Authority.*** WildStorm had intended to offer the color variant in a 1:10 ratio and the black-and-white sketch variant in a 1:50 ratio; due to a mixup, however, the color variant was shipped in a 1:50 ratio and the black-and-white in a 1:10. To fill initial order commitments, DC is shipping replacement color variants in the originally announced 1:10 ratio (presumably this will be the same color version as was initially shipped at the 1:50 ratio).

In: ***Marvel Comics Presents,*** the 1980's-1990's anthology series that paved the way for the ongoing ***Wolverine*** title, will be resurrected next year. "As editors *Nick Lowe, Andy Schmidt,* and I have been casting for writers and artists for ***Marvel Comics Presents*** for the last few months, we have almost an entire year's worth of stories lined up," editor *Warren Simons* said. No word yet on which characters will be featured, whether the lineup will be set or rotating, or which

creators will be involved—but once the announcements are made, you'll hear about it in *CSN*.

In: Little Foot, a new imprint from Silent Devil Publishing spotlighting creator-owned graphic novels. The first Little Foot release is ***Mr. Big,*** a 152-page digest sized graphic novel by *Carol & Matt Dembicki*. "Little Foot is a way for Silent Devil to showcase an amazing range of graphic novels done by some of the best cartoonists working today," publisher *Christian Beranek* said. "Mr. Big is our first book and we're very excited about it. We plan on producing two to four novels a year under this line."

Out: *Laurell K. Hamilton, Stacie Ritchie & Brett Booth's* ***Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter—Guilty Pleasures #1,*** the first new book produced under the Dabel Brothers/Marvel deal, has sold out of

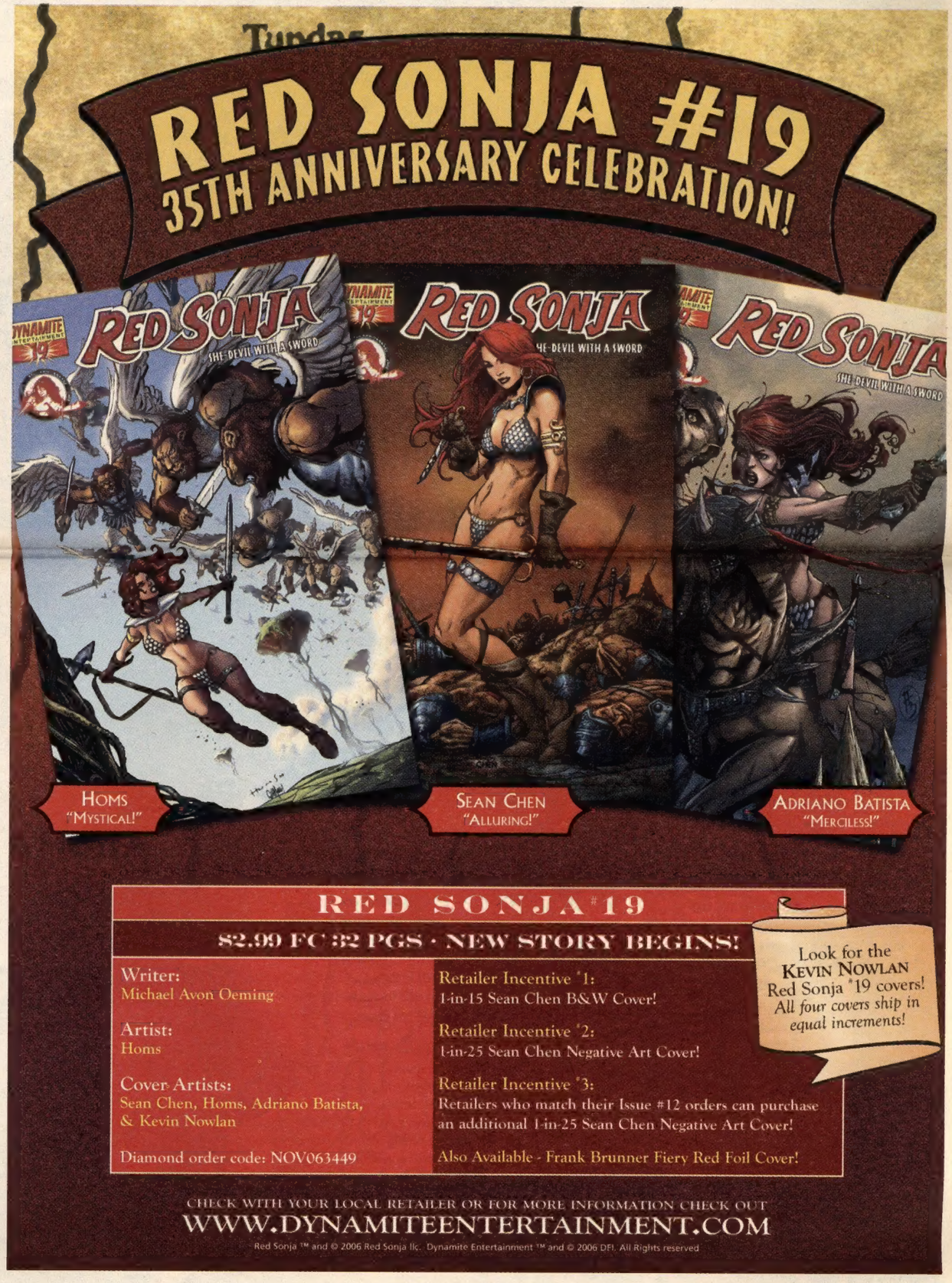
its entire first printing. "That the entire print run of the first ***Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter—Guilty Pleasures*** sold out in a day is too cool," Hamilton said. DBPro and Marvel will have a second printing of the comic, featuring the cover art originally seen on the cover of ***Comic Shop News #1004,*** in shops in late November; in addition, the publishers are offering a limited edition print with each copy of the second issue to thank fans for their support of this series, which seems to be attracting large numbers of comics newcomers. "Retailers have told us that they've seen more new faces in their stores similar to the release of Civil War," Marvel's Vice President of Sales *David Gabriel* said. "New people are embracing the industry, old fans are embracing the new material that Marvel is putting out and it's all a part of Marvel's mission to expand and reach a broader audience." The second issue should be available within the next week.

Out: All four standard-sized Gemstone versions of the ***Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide Volume 36***—the softcover and hardcover editions of the *John K. Snyder III* and the *George Perez* cover image—are totally sold out from the publisher.

In: A second printing for *Sean O'Reilly & Stjepan Sejic's* ***Kade: Sun of Perdition #1.*** The second edition will feature a recolored version of the *Ben Templesmith* art that was originally featured on the variant cover.

Out: ***Wildcats #2,*** the second issue of the compelling WorldStorm series by *Grant Morrison & Jim Lee;* originally scheduled for mid-November release, will be delayed until March 2007.

In: ***The Gamekeeper,*** a new comic by director *Guy Ritchie* and *Andy Diggle* slated to appear next year under Virgin Comics' Director's Cut imprint. According to Diggle's blog, the series is about "a killer who's more in touch with the natural world than he is with his own humanity. Guy came up with the original character and premise, and I'm developing it into a ten-issue series to be illustrated by ***Devi's*** *Mukesh Singh*."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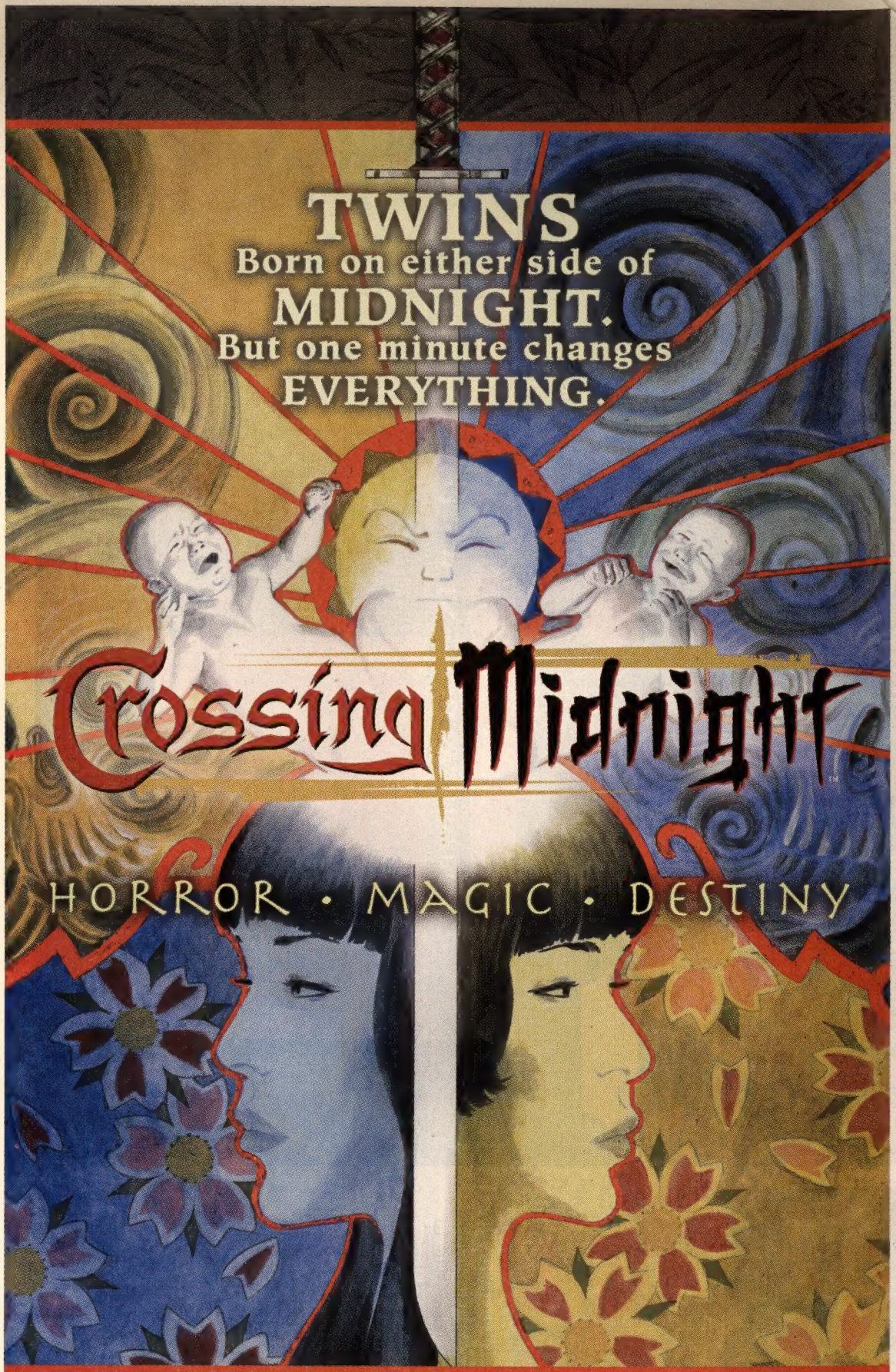

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